

# THE CENTURION

## DELAWARE COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

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## CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

My Fellow Veterans,

As you know, the Commission has been working for over thirteen years toward having a State Veterans Home. With the support of Governor Minner, Delaware Legislators, and through the efforts of both veteran's organizations and individual veterans, a Home is now being constructed on Airport Road in Milford. The official Groundbreaking Ceremony will be held at the site at 11:00 AM on August 15, 2005. All of you are invited to attend. We have been successful in obtaining approval from the Delaware General Assembly to hire our third State Veterans Service Officer. With that position filled, we can better support our veterans and their dependents that are residing in the Wilmington and upper New Castle County areas. It has been said that a leader is successful only when he or she is a part of a good team. Based on that premise, I consider my tours as chairman highly successful because of the other fourteen members of the Commission that have worked so well together with the common goal of improving the lot of all veterans. I would like to publicly thank the Commissioners for their efforts on behalf of the Delaware Veterans Home and for obtaining the many services offered to veterans and their dependents.

Jim Thompson  
Chairman

## ✿THOUGHT FOR THE QUARTER✿

*"The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war...shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation."*

*President George Washington*

### **DELEGATION ANNOUNCES \$19.4 MILLION FEDERAL SHARE FOR STATE'S FIRST VETERANS HOME**

U.S. Senators Joseph R. Biden and Thomas R. Carper and Representative Michael N. Castle announced they have successfully secured the necessary \$19.4 million in federal funding through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to build the new State Veterans nursing home in Milford, DE. The federal government is responsible for 65 percent of the funding for the new home. "There are tens of thousands of older veterans in Delaware – men and women who've served our nation with honor and distinction, and it is our responsibility to care for them – period," said Senator Biden. "In my mind, this is about our priorities and values – if we say that we are grateful for the many sacrifices and contributions veterans have made to this great nation of ours – we need to put our money where are mouths are. We owe this to our veterans. It is long past due." "One of the best ways we can honor the courage and service of our veterans is by offering those in need of long-term or specialized care a comfortable and caring facility," said Senator Carper. "As life expectancies climb and the state continues to attract more veterans looking for an attractive place to retire, the need for this veterans home and ones like it will only grow. I'm proud that the federal government and the State of Delaware came together to provide our proud veterans with a home they can be proud of, one that they so richly deserve." "With this critical funding, Delaware will no longer be the only one of the 48 lower states without a home. This is long overdue and welcome news for veterans. Those who served us so bravely and courageously in the military at home and abroad deserve this home. With over 30,000 veterans age 65 or older in our state, this home will provide care to many of those men and women who served our country so honorably. This funding keeps us on

track for the groundbreaking in Milford next month," Castle said. "This grant, given on the eve of VA's observance of its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, ensures that veterans in Delaware will have access to the same long-term care enjoyed by veterans of other states," said Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "This grant is tangible evidence of VA's commitment to Delaware's 85,000 veterans. The \$19.4 million will pay up to 65 percent of the cost to construct a new 150-bed nursing home and domiciliary in Milford. Overall cost of the project is estimated at \$29.9 million. In fiscal year 2004, VA spent more than \$184 million in Delaware to serve about 85,000 state veterans. Further information about state benefits for Delaware veterans can be obtained on the Internet at <http://www.state.de.us/veteran/> or by calling 739-2792. (*Delaware Delegation News Release, July 12, 2005*)

### **VETERANS HOME GROUNDBREAKING**

The new date for the Veterans Home Groundbreaking has been set for August 15, 2005 at 11:00 AM and will be held at the Veterans Home site - Airport Rd & Rt. 15, Milford, Delaware. For additional information, contact the Commission of Veterans Affairs at (800) 344-9900 or (302) 739-2792.

### **BUS TRIP TO WASHINGTON, DC**

The Heritage Commission will sponsor a coach bus trip to Washington, DC, for veterans on Friday, September 9, 2005. The bus will leave from the Public Archives Bldg at 121 Duke of York St, Dover, at 9:00 AM. The cost per person is \$20.00. Each person attending will receive a complimentary copy of the Delaware Heritage Press book, Delaware's Coastal Defenses. The Commission staff will also raffle off a Commission gift basket full of souvenirs and other Commission books. We

will be leaving DC at 2:00 PM to return home. We will be attending the National World War II Memorial. At the same time, we will spend the afternoon on the mall and everyone will have the opportunity to visit the Vietnam Memorial, Washington Monument, and other points of interest within walking distance. Lunch is on your own. Please contact the Heritage Commission at (302) 744-5077 (Kent & Sussex Co.) or (302) 577-5044 (New Castle Co.) to reserve your seat. All checks are to be payable to the Delaware Heritage Commission. Limit of 40 participants.

### **SIXTH ANNUAL DELAWARE PROCUREMENT EXPO**

On September 15, 2005 the university of Delaware small business development center's procurement technical assistance program in cooperation with The Veterans Corporation, MBNA America, AstraZeneca, Delmarva Power, Dade Behring, Delaware River Port Authority, Visa, University of Delaware, The Business Ledger and the Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League, are presenting Delaware's Sixth Annual Delaware Procurement Expo at the University of Delaware's Bob Carpenter Center. This full-day event is designed to make small and mid-size businesses aware of the procurement opportunities and processes of local, state and federal government agencies, as well corporations. This year, in addition to the many small and mid-size businesses exhibiting and attending this event, we will showcase 100 Veteran and Service Disabled Veteran Owned Businesses as guest exhibitors. The 2005 Procurement Expo will feature government exhibitors from Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland and the District of Columbia. Major corporations, from the surrounding states who are seeking qualified small business suppliers will also be in attendance to discuss their business opportunities. In addition, there will be local small business exhibitors, some of who will be looking for teaming partners to bid on large contracts. The cost to attend this one day event is \$40. There will be one special training session during the expo that will be offered to Vets and Service Disabled Vets

only. The training will be conducted by Mirinda Jackson from MJA, Inc on GSA Federal Supply Schedules. The small business exhibitor package will cost \$200.00 and include exhibit space and meals for two attendees. The **Expo** will also include an invitation only wine and cheese reception. For further information about the **Delaware Procurement Expo 2005** and related events, please contact the Delaware Small Business Development Center in Wilmington at (302) 571-5677.

### **A CALL FOR ARTIFACTS**

The Women's Memorial is developing a new exhibit to focus on women's service during Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom to be unveiled on Veterans Day. The Foundation is looking for pictures, artifacts and memorabilia, uniforms, and oral histories of women who served in Afghanistan and Iraq. Items can be donated or loaned for the duration of the exhibit. No item is insignificant in telling this story and can include anything from a set of orders or a load list for deployment, to an item purchased in a bazaar. Contact Lee Ann Ghajar, Curator of Exhibits at [exhibits@womensmemorial.org](mailto:exhibits@womensmemorial.org) or by calling 703-533-1155 or 800-222-2294 for more information about how to participate.

### **DELAWARE SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER TO HOST FREE PROGRAM FOR VETERAN ENTREPRENEURS**

The Delaware Small Business Development Center will present a free seminar, *Doing Business in Delaware*, for veteran entrepreneurs on Saturday, September 17, from 8:00 AM to Noon. The location is to be determined. The program features workshops and networking opportunities for start up and existing veteran-owned businesses. The workshop will focus on veteran and reservist benefits, government procurement opportunities, financing sources, and assistance for small businesses owned by Guard and Reserve members. Officials from the Small Business Administration,

the Center for Veterans Enterprise in Washington and the SBDC will speak. Delaware SBDC Director Clinton Tymes noted both the extensive work that each of these organizations – the SBA, the Center for Veterans Enterprise and the SBDC – is doing on behalf of veteran entrepreneurs and the significance of bringing these resources together. Veteran, National Guard members and reservists interested in attending must register by contacting the SBDC at (302) 831-1555 or by visiting the SBDC's website at [www.delawaresbdc.org](http://www.delawaresbdc.org), under *Training Events*. Early registration is strongly encouraged as space is limited. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities will be made if requested at least two weeks in advance. Contact Carla Withers at 302-571-5226.

### **RECORD FUNDING APPROVED FOR VETERANS**

U.S. Sen. Larry Craig, Chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, said that veterans should be pleased with a \$2 Billion emergency supplemental approved by the Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, of which he is a member. "This Congress, and this President, have put forth record amounts of money on behalf of our nation's veterans," Craig said. "Since George W. Bush took office, the budget for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will have risen from \$48 billion in 2001 to nearly \$70 billion this year – a 46 percent increase in five years." The overall federal budget has risen roughly 30 percent during the same time frame. Just three weeks ago the Senate approved a \$1.5 billion emergency supplemental for veterans' 2005 budget, which is a part of the Interior Appropriations bill. "As we wait for the Interior Appropriations bill to be finalized, we have today made steps to ensure that there is adequate money to ensure that veterans are well taken care of," Craig said. "The 1.5 billion approved earlier and the \$2 billion approved today will later be reconciled. But we have assured veterans today that there will be sufficient money to meet the needs of veterans. Clearly, we are going to reach a point where we cannot continue to keep spending at this pace, but the needs of veterans are

being met." In addition to the emergency supplemental of \$2 billion, the legislation approved will provide more than \$70.7 billion in direct payments to fund the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2006. That figure includes \$36.6 billion for mandatory veterans' benefits including pensions and compensation. The subcommittee also included over \$34 billion in discretionary spending, more than \$1.25 billion above the president's budget request and more than \$3.3 billion above FY 2005. That amount includes \$23.3 billion for medical services, \$2.8 billion for medical administration, \$3.2 billion for medical facilities and \$412 million for medical and prosthetic research. The appropriations legislation passed the House of Representatives on May 26<sup>th</sup>. It will now be sent to the full Senate Appropriations Committee before being considered by the full Senate. (*Chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, July 19, 2005*)

### **COMBAT RELATED DEATH GRATUITY**

A temporary combat-related death gratuity of \$100,000 took effect May 11 when the President signed the Emergency Supplemental Wartime Appropriations Act (Public Law 109-13). It applies only to deaths in combat or in designated combat zones, or from combat-related training as defined under criteria set down in the law that determines a disabled retiree's eligibility for Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC). Eligible deaths under those criteria include those caused by dangerous activities such as parachute, diving or demolition duty; resulting from war games and other conditions simulating war; or caused by tools of war such as mishaps with military vehicles or other combat equipment. The bigger death gratuity is retroactive to 7 OCT 01, the start of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Lump-sum death payments for non-combat-related deaths remain at \$12,400. The new law also provides an additional special death gratuity of \$150,000, also for deaths from combat or in combat zones going back to 7 OCT 01. This, in effect, is the way Congress chose to apply retroactively the increase in maximum coverage under Servicemembers'

Group Life Insurance, which is also part of the new law. Maximum SGLI coverage will jump to \$400,000 from \$250,000 effective 1 SEP 05. The increase will be automatic for all service members unless they opt for the maximum SGLI coverage of \$400,000 and will see their monthly premiums increase from \$16.25 to \$26.00. Until 1 SEP however, the additional \$150,000 death gratuity, payable for active duty deaths in combat zones or resulting from combat-related training, remains in effect. Because the wartime supplemental bill expires on 30 SEP, provisions to make permanent the combat-related death gratuity of \$100,000 and SGLI coverage of \$400,000 are included in fiscal 2006 defense authorization bills moving through Congress. In late May the House Armed Services Committee rejected an amendment from Rep. Rob Andrew (D-NJ) to allow the increase in the military death gratuity, from \$12,400 to \$100,000, to apply to all active duty deaths. (*Various, May 05*)

## **COMBAT VETERAN FACT SHEET**

### **Introduction**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides cost-free health care services and nursing home care for conditions possibly related to military services to veterans with combat service after November 11, 1998 for a period of 2 years beginning on the date of their separation from active military service.

### **Who's eligible?**

Veterans, including activated Reservist and National Guard members, are eligible if they served on active duty in a theater of combat operations during a period of war after the Gulf War or in combat against a hostile force during a period of "hostilities" after November 11, 1998 and have been discharged under other than dishonorable conditions. Public Law 105-368 [Title 38 USC 171(d) (D)] authorizes VA to provide combat veterans cost-free care for conditions potentially related to their combat service for up to two years following their discharge or release from active duty. These veterans will be enrolled into Enrollment Priority Group 6 if not otherwise qualified for a higher enrollment priority group assignment. VA provides full access to the Medical

Benefits Package by virtue of this enrollment status. Also, veterans who enroll with VA under this authority will retain enrollment eligibility even after their two-year post discharge period ends under current enrollment policies. For those veterans who do not enroll with VA during this post two-year discharge period, eligibility for enrollment and subsequent care is based on other factors such as a compensable service connection rating, VA pension status, catastrophic disability determination or the veteran's financial circumstances.

### **What's meant by "hostilities?"**

"Hostilities" is defined as conflict in which Armed Forces members are subject to the danger comparable to that faced in a period of war. For purposes of establishing this special eligibility VA accepts service documentation that reflects service in a combat theater, receipt of combat service medals and/or receipt of imminent danger or hostile fire pay or tax benefits.

### **Co pays**

Veterans who qualify under this special eligibility are not subject to co pay requirements for conditions potentially related to their combat service. Unless otherwise exempted these veterans must either disclose their prior year household income or decline to provide their financial information and agree to make applicable co-payments for care or services VA determines are clearly unrelated to their military service. This disclosure may provide additional benefits such as eligibility for travel reimbursement, cost-free medication and/or medical care for services unrelated to duty in the theater of combat operations. The VA health care provider is responsible for determining if treatment is possibly related to the combat veteran's military service. In making this determination, the health care provider must consider that the following types of conditions are not ordinarily considered to be due to military service: (1) Congenital or developmental conditions for example, scoliosis, (2) Conditions which are known to have existed before military service, and (3) Conditions have a specific and well-established cause and that began after military combat service.

### **Dental Care**

Eligibility for VA dental benefits is based on very specific guideline and differs significantly from eligibility requirements for medical care. Combat veterans may be authorized dental treatment as reasonably necessary for the one-time correction of dental condition if:

- They served on active duty and were discharged or released from active duty under conditions other than dishonorable from a period of service not less than 90 days and
- The certificate of discharge or release does not bear a certification that the veteran was provided, within the 90-day period immediately before the date of such discharge or release, a complete dental examination (including the dental X-rays) and all appropriate dental service and treatment indicated by the examination to be needed and
- Application for VA dental treatment is made within 90 days of discharge or release

#### **To get additional information**

Additional information is available at the nearest VA medical facility. The telephone number can be found in the local telephone directory under the “U.S. Government” listings. Veterans can also call toll-free: 1-800-827-1000 or the Health Benefit Service Center at 1-877-827-1000. Veterans may also visit the VA health benefits website: (*Veterans Health Administration, June 24, 2005*)

### **SBP OPEN SEASON**

The pentagon’s Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) open season implementation plan is nearly ready and hopefully will be available to the public in late July. The open season [1 Oct 05 through 30 Sep 06] will give non-enrolled retirees a change to enroll and provide their spouses a significantly improved SBP benefit. Legislation approved last year (which also authorized the open season) will phase out the current SBP age – 62 benefit reduction by April 08 – effectively providing lifetime SBP annuities of 55% of covered retired pay. Notices will be included with retirees’ December retired pay statements and in the DFAS newsletter that accompanies the statement. During the one-year open season, current non-participants will be able to elect any coverage they could have elected when

previously eligible. Those currently participating in SBP at less than maximum levels may increase their coverage. The exception is that previous SBP participants who exercised an option to terminate SBP enrollment will not be allowed to re-enroll. Open season enrollees will have to pay all back premiums from the date of retirement plus interest, either as lump sum or in 24 monthly installments. Members will also begin paying the same monthly premiums they would have been paying at this point if they had enrolled in SBP when first eligible. Open enrollment fee amounts are currently being finalized. Members who enroll during the open season and pay the back premiums and interest will receive credit toward 30-year paid-up SBP coverage as if they had enrolled when first eligible. To enroll, members must apply by filling out a hard copy form that will be available on the DOD Web site (the site location is not yet available). The Defense Department is developing a calculator to help open-season enrollees figure their individual buy-in fees and monthly premiums. Service personnel officials will be provided with the calculator, and Retiree Activity offices at bases and stations will receive instruction on the new enrollment process. Spousal concurrence will not be required for open season enrollment in most cases, since any change is an upgrade over what the spouse has now. However, Reserve Component SBP elections for anything less than full and immediate coverage will require written spousal concurrence. The effective date of enrollment will be the first day of the first month after the date DFAS receives the open season enrollment application. DFAS will notify the member to confirm the effective date of the election, the buy-in cost and the prospective monthly premiums. Members will have 30 days from the date on the DFAS notification letter to change their minds and cancel the election, if they choose. To guard against “death-bed” enrollments, applicants will have to survive and pay premiums for 24 months for the survivor to receive SBP coverage. If the member dies before the end of 24 months, all paid premiums and the enrollment fee will be refunded... further details will be provided once the pentagon finalizes and releases the open season

form, instructions, and fee schedules. (*MOAA Legislative Update, June 24, 2005*)

### **MEDICARE HANDBOOK**

Federal health officials are revising the draft of this year's Medicare handbook to give a clearer explanation of new rules on benefits, particularly on prescription drugs, before it is sent to millions of elderly Americans. An early draft to a wide range of policy experts outside the agency, ranging from insurers to liberal advocacy groups resulted in feedback asking for clearer explanations of the new benefits. The handbook will be revised to make a more clear distinction between Medicare programs administered through private health maintenance organizations and preferred provider organizations and the more traditional fee-for-service Medicare programs used by millions of people. The draft of the handbook did not provide details about the gaps in prescription drug coverage. After the beneficiary pays a \$250 deductible, Medicare pays three-fourths of the next \$2,250 in drug costs. There is no benefit between \$2,250 and \$5,100, a \$2,850 gap in coverage. But once a beneficiary has spent \$3,600 on drugs out-of-pocket, including the deductible and co pays, the government pays all but 5% of additional drug costs. Now, more details about payments and coverage on prescription drugs will be included. Some groups have questioned whether the handbook should make claims that private plans offer a better value than traditional Medicare. The guidebook also says the new drug benefit will be superior to coverage available under existing insurance policies that supplement Medicare, a claim some critics' dispute. The handbook is being tested in focus groups of beneficiaries to make sure it is clear before it is sent out to all Medicare beneficiaries in the fall. (*Associated Press Washington, DC, May 21, 2005*)

### **VA COMP PAYMENT DISPARITY**

The VA has struggled for months to explain why veterans in some states receive lower payments than those in others. In releasing a new report on the

issue, the agency recently said demographic factors partly explained the state-to-state difference – saying, for example, that veterans of some wars are far more prevalent in certain states than others. But an analysis of VA data shows that veterans of the same war get vastly different payments depending on their state. The average payment for World War II veterans, for example, goes from less than \$6,000 a year to more than \$13,000, depending on the state. A spokesman for Sen. Barack Obama, (D-IL), who has been battling the VA over the low average payments to Illinois veterans, stated the real problem comes down to the amount of subjectivity that seems to be favoring in some states. In Illinois, World War II vets bring home an average of \$5,722 a year: in New Mexico, it's \$13,558 – or 137% more. Among veterans of all time periods, the average annual check in Illinois is \$6,961: in New Mexico, it's \$12,004 – or 72% more. The VA pointed to World War II veterans nationwide, who get smaller checks from the agency than veterans of the Vietnam or Korean wars. So, the VA said, a state with a higher-than-average percentage of World War II vets is likely to have lower-than-average veteran payments. The more World War II vets in these low states pulls down your average payment. The same hold true for most of the other demographic categories the VA used to explain the variation from high to low states, according to Knight Ridder's analysis of the same data used by the VA's inspector general. It also holds true when looking at the cluster of states at the high end of the compensation ladder compared with those at the bottom. The inspector general did say that several factors contribute to the overall variation, and that he couldn't pinpoint which ones were more important than others. He pointed to inconsistent decisions from office to office, particularly in cases involving a veteran's claim for post-traumatic stress disorder, as also contributing to the variations. The inspector general also said the VA's antiquated disability regulations, as well as staffing and training problems, can affect the state-to-state averages. The detailed information that shows how much veterans receive by state and by each demographic group was in the inspector general's 200-page Report# 05-00765-137 which can be

viewed at <http://www.va.gov/oig/>. (*Charlotte Observer*, June 1, 2005)

### **SBA CREATES THREE NEW VETERANS BUSINESS OUTREACH CENTERS TO MEET VETS BUSINESS NEEDS NATIONWIDE**

Three new Veterans Business Outreach Centers created by the U.S. Small Business Administration will join an existing center to provide nationwide entrepreneurial development services to eligible military veterans who own or are considering starting a small business. "These Veterans Business Outreach Centers will provide a myriad of services including entrepreneurial training and guidance, educational workshops, financial guidance and assistance, and mentoring," said SBA Administrator Hector V. Barreto. "The contributions and sacrifices these men and women have given to our country are of inestimable value and the SBA stands ready to support the President's goal of helping veterans everywhere to start and grow small businesses."

Services provided by the VBOCs include:

- Pre-Business Plan Workshops that deal specifically with the Major issues of self-employment. An important segment of these workshops entails the usage of the Internet as a tool for developing and expanding businesses, and each client is afforded the opportunity to work directly with a business counselor.
- Concept Assessments to help VBOC clients to assess their entrepreneurial needs and requirements.
- Business Plan Preparations to help clients to develop and maintain a five-year business plan.
- Comprehensive Feasibility Analysis that provides help identifying and analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the business plan.
- Entrepreneurial Training and Counseling to help VBOCs, working with other SBA resource partners, target entrepreneurial training projects and counseling sessions tailored specifically to address the needs and concerns of service-disabled veteran entrepreneurs.
- Mentorship to enable VBOCs to conduct, as appropriate, on-site visits with clients to ensure

adherence to their business plans and a monthly review of their financial statements.

Other Business Development Services include: providing assistance and training in such areas as government contracting, international trade, franchising, Internet marketing, and accounting. For more information about SBA's Veteran Business Outreach Centers (VBOCs) or a list of the centers go to [www.sba.gov/VETS](http://www.sba.gov/VETS) and click on Services to help veterans. For more information about all of the SBA's programs and services, visit [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov). (*SBA News Release*, June 22, 2005)

### **SOCIAL SECURITY COLA 2006**

Seniors will get little help from their Cost-Of-Living Adjustment (COLA) next year to cover the expected jump in Medicare cost. The Social Security Trustees recently estimated that the COLA paid on January 01, 2006 would be about 2% to 2.6%. This is hardly enough to keep up with a planned 15% Medicare Part B premium and deductible increase from \$78.20 to \$89.20 per month. Nevertheless, despite the low COLAs in recent years, some Social Security reform proposals that include provisions to cut COLAs are being considered by Congress. Although most supporters of proposals to add private accounts to Social Security have promised that the benefits of current retirees would not be cut, Comptroller General David Walker recently testified before the House Committee on Ways and Means, that some of the proposals to reform Social Security do include COLA cutting options. The proposals include cutting COLAs so they are less than the CPI, limit the COLA to a specific threshold, or delay COLAs as was done in 1983 as part of reforms under the Greenspan Social Security Commission. Senator Maria Cantwell (WA) has introduced legislation which, if approved, would nullify SSA COLA reduction proposals. S.275 would provide a more fair COLA by computing the annual increase using a senior's only index (i.e. Consumer Price Index for the Elderly). Seniors concerned over this issue have the option of contacting their legislators to sign on to this bill as sponsors. (*TREA Senior Citizens League Newsletter 10#5 dtd Jun 1, 2005*)

## **RESERVES DENTAL BENEFIT**

Some National Guard and Reserve members can now skip the 12-month waiting period for full family dental benefits when they retire, as long as they enroll in the TRICARE Retiree Dental Plan (TRDP) within 120 days of their retirement date. Effective 1 FEB 05, the 12-month waiver offer is retroactive to FEB 04. A National Guard or Reserve member who retired on 1 FEB 04 and enrolled in TRDP within 120 days of their retirement date, for example, may provide a copy of their retirement orders showing that their TRDP enrollment was effected within the first 120 days of their retirement effective date. Once the documentation has been submitted, they may submit claims for any additional covered dental services provided to eligible family members during the waived period. Additional TRDP benefits available for both adults and children during the 12-month period covered by the waiver include cast crowns, cast restorations, bridges, dentures and orthodontics. Diagnostic and preventive services, basic restorative services, periodontics, endodontics, oral surgery, dental emergencies and a separate dental accident benefit were already available to newly retired National Guard and Reserve members without a waiting period. Retroactive waiver requests require a copy of the beneficiary's retirement orders be sent to Delta Dental of California, Federal Services, P.O. Box 537007, Sacramento, CA 95853-7007. Gray-area retired reservists who are entitled to retiree pay but will not receive it until age 60 are also eligible to receive full dental benefits early. They must submit the waiver within 120 days of their retirement effective date, not the date that they turn 60. For more information visit the TRDP Web site at [www.trdp.org](http://www.trdp.org) or call 1-888-838-8737. (NAUS Update, May 6, 2005)

## **AGENT ORANGE AND DIABETES**

The DOD released July 8, 2005 the latest report of the Air Force Health Study on the health effects of exposure to herbicides in Vietnam, which includes the strongest evidence to date that Agent Orange is

associated with adult-onset diabetes. This supports the findings from earlier reports in 1992 and 1997. The Air Force Health Study summarizes the results of the 2002 physical examination of 1,951 veterans, which is the final examination of the 20-year epidemiological study. The Ranch Hand Study was named after the operation responsible for spraying herbicides in Vietnam between 1962 and 1971 to deny cover and destroy crops of the North Vietnamese Army. Since the first examination in 1982, the Air Force has tried to determine whether long-term health effects exist in the Ranch Hand pilots and ground crews, and if these effects can be attributed to the herbicides used in Vietnam, mainly Agent Orange and its contaminant, dioxin. The report, along with many other studies on herbicide and dioxin exposure, will be reviewed by the National Academy of Sciences. Based upon this review, the Secretary of Veteran Affairs can ask Congress for legislation on disability compensation and health care. Results from the 2002 physical examination support adult-onset diabetes as the most important health problem seen in the Air Force Health Study. They suggest that as dioxin levels increase, not only are the presence and severity of adult-onset diabetes increased, but the time of onset of the disease is decreased. A 166% increase in diabetes requiring insulin control was seen in those with the highest levels of dioxin. This is consistent with the strong evidence found in animal studies. Cardiovascular disease findings were not consistent, but separate studies have found an increased risk of cardiovascular death in Ranch Hand enlisted ground crews, the subgroup with the highest average serum dioxin. Overall, Ranch Hand pilots and ground crews examined in 2002 had not experienced a statistically significant increase in heart disease relative to the comparison group. Associations between measures of cardiac function and history of heart disease and herbicide or dioxin exposure were not consistent or clinically interpretable as adverse. Other findings included an increase in the frequency of reported acne after service in Southeast Asia in Ranch Hand enlisted ground crew members, but the lack of corresponding patterns of skin lesions observed at the physical examination rendered this finding

difficult to interpret. Finally, several blood tests regarding liver function and blood lipids were elevated and did tend to increase with dioxin level. However, these tests which may be elevated for many reasons, do not constitute a disease by themselves and cannot be explained by other findings in the study. At the end of the 20 years of follow-up, Ranch Hand pilots and ground crews as a group exhibited not statistically significant increase in the risk of cancer relative to comparisons. Differences by military occupation were inconsistent. Most importantly, the Ranch Hand enlisted ground crews, the subgroup with the highest dioxin levels and presumably the greatest herbicide exposure, exhibited a 14% decreased risk of cancer. These results do not suggest that herbicides or dioxin exposure are related to cancer in these veterans. The report emphasizes three major limitations to the study. First, the results cannot be generalized to other groups, such as all Vietnam veterans or Vietnamese civilians, which have been exposed in different ways and to different levels of herbicide. Second, the size of the study makes it difficult to detect increases in rare diseases, thus small increases in rare diseases may be missed by the study. Third, other variables that were not considered in this report could be confounding factors influencing the results. The report is available on the Air Force Health Study Web Site at: [www.brooks.af.mil/AFRL/HED/hedb/default.html](http://www.brooks.af.mil/AFRL/HED/hedb/default.html) (DOD News Release, July 8, 2005)

### **VA GRAVE LOCATOR**

The VA has launched a National Gravesite Locator website that allows the public to easily find gravesite locations of deceased friends and family members. The online database, <http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov>, contains more than three million electronic records of veterans and dependents buried in VA's 120 national cemeteries since the Civil War. Records from 1999 to the present are included from some state cemeteries and Arlington National Cemetery. Updated nightly, the site displays name, dates of birth and death, period of military service, branch of service and rank if

known, the cemetery's location and phone number, and the grave's precise location in the cemetery. (*American Veteran Magazine, Fall 2004*)

### **ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY**

The fiscal 2000 National Defense Authorization Act contained a provision to expand Arlington National Cemetery. After years of searching for additional space for Arlington National Cemetery, Defense Department officials have garnered more than 70 acres of land to expand the sprawling 600-plus-acre hillside on the west bank of the Potomac River overlooking the nation's capital. In 1998, officials estimated they would run out of grave space between the year 2025 and 2030. In preparation for this eventuality the cemetery superintendent was directed to develop a new master plan and to look at not only what was needed to do internally to maintain the cemetery, but also how to look at expanding the cemetery beyond the year of 2025. Officials searched around the cemetery in all directions to see who owned the land, what it was currently being used for, and the likelihood of being able to acquire the land. This has resulted in the acquisition of three parcels of land so far, including the 44-acre Navy Annex that lies to the south. They also acquired half of a 24-acre tract inside the cemetery that had belonged to the National Park Service, which was being used as a buffer zone between the Arlington House and the cemetery. The Arlington House mansion is where Gen. Robert E. Lee lived before the Civil War. After he joined the Confederacy, the plantation mansion was confiscated at the outbreak of the Civil War and converted to headquarters for the Union's Army at the Potomac. The grounds were used as a burial site for families that were too poor to claim their deceased loved ones from the battlefield. Today, the mansion house is restored as a museum, and the grounds are considered a sacred shrine. The cemetery also will use a 17-acre tract of land that's now a picnic area at adjacent Fort Myer and is looking at relocating utilities inside the cemetery from underneath the grass-tufted area and placing them underneath roads. With these initiatives in place, Arlington should be able to continue

operations until at least 2060, and that would include development for both ground and columbarium burials. For more information on the Arlington National Cemetery, including eligibility criteria, go to <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.org> (*Air Force Retiree News*, June 1, 2005)

## **VETERANS LEGACY FOUNDATION**

A group of former POWs, concerned and frustrated with the lack of public understanding of the Vietnam War and the negative image of those who served there, has embarked on a mission to tell the American people the truth about what really happened in Vietnam. Their organization named the Vietnam Veterans Legacy Foundation (VVLf) will be led by Col. George E. "Bud" Day, a Medal of Honor recipient and former POW who served in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, and is the Air Force's most highly decorated combat veteran. Col. Day said, "The false history of Vietnam has been used to demoralize our troops in combat, undermine the public's confidence in U.S. foreign policy and weaken our national security. Radical leftists such as Jane Fonda lied about the war 35 years ago, and are still lying about it today. The goal of the VVLf is to continue the work of countering more than three decades of misinformation and propaganda, and to set the record straight." The VVLf board of Directors also includes Col. Kenneth W. Cordier, Cdr. Paul Galanti, and the Honorable James Warner – all former POWs – Mary Jane McManus, wife of former POW Kevin McManus, and Vietnam veterans Robert A. McMahon and Wallace Nunn, who is Chairman of the Medal of Honor Foundation. The VVLf will serve as a national repository of Vietnam-related materials, information and records, and will make this information available to the public. The organization will create independent films and documentaries, and provide exhibits and visual materials to museums, libraries and other public places. The VVLf will also act as a source of accurate information for journalists, authors and researchers, and will work to counter and expose false information presented about the Vietnam War in the media. The Vietnam Veterans Legacy

Foundation ([www.VietnamLegacy.org](http://www.VietnamLegacy.org)) is a 501 C (3) public service corporation whose mission is to educate and inform the public about the Vietnam War, its events, its history, and the men and women who sacrificed to serve their country in Vietnam. (*NAUS*, May 6, 2005)

## **PENTAGON WASTED SUPPLIES**

Government investigators told House members June 7, 2005, that the Department of Defense (DOD) spent a least \$400 million in fiscal 2002 and 2003 buying boots, tents, bandages and other goods at the same time it was getting rid of identical items it has paid for but never used. That finding came as part of a broader inquiry by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) that uncovered deep flaws in the Pentagon's system for determining when it needs to buy new supplies and how it disposes of supposedly excess inventory. Investigators discovered that out of \$33 billion of goods the DOD marked as excess from 2002 through 2004, \$4 billion was in excellent condition. Only about 12% of that was reused by the department. The other \$3.5 billion the GAO alleged included significant waste and inefficiency because new or good-as-new items were transferred and donated outside the DOD, sold for pennies on the dollar, or destroyed. Investigators brought some of that equipment with them to the hearing of a House Government Reform Committee subcommittee. Among the items on display were unused military uniforms and medals that GAO has purchased off of a publicly available Web site intended for disposing of unwanted government property. The GAO also obtained the power-supply system for a component of a nuclear submarine that was on the Pentagon's "critical shortage" list at the time. Subcommittee members reacted angrily to the findings. Pentagon officials testified that they generally agreed with the GAO's findings, saying new items had been accidentally labeled in some cases as excess inventory. The officials said they have made improvements, however, and plan to have a computer system up and running by January that would prevent Pentagon officials from buying new equipment that is already available internally.

The report followed GAO inquiries that uncovered evidence that DOD was selling unused biological and chemical-weapons-resistant suits for \$3 each. At the same time it was buying hundreds of thousands more for \$200 apiece. Investigators found that example typified a broader problem. For instance, they paid \$2,898 for \$79,649 worth of tires, badges, circuit cards and medical supplies. In some cases, the goods had been marked as junk but were delivered in their original packaging. At the same time, the Pentagon continued to order more of the same items from its suppliers. GAO investigators also found that at contractor-operated facilities where excess equipment was supposed to be liquidated, items were left exposed to rain and wind. Much of it ended up damaged beyond repair. In addition, the DOD said that between 2002 and 2004, \$466 million of equipment marked as excess – including sensitive equipment such as missile warheads – had been lost, stolen or damaged. The GAO will continue to investigate where those items ended up. In spite of this waste and mismanagement DOD continues to say they cannot afford to support concurrent receipt and retired members' health care. (*Washington Post Griff Witte article, June 05*)

### **DNREC OFFERS FREE STATE PARK PASSES, FISHING AND HUNTING LICENSES TO IRAQ WAR VETERANS**

The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control is offering free one-year park passes and fishing and hunting licenses to Delaware's Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom veterans. "The men and women in our armed forces have made tremendous sacrifices, risking their lives while being separated from their families," said Secretary John A. Hughes. "DNREC is pleased to help express the State's gratitude for their service by offering them some much-needed relaxation and enjoyment." Veterans interested in taking advantage of the offer can get details by calling the Division of Parks and Recreation's Office of Business Services at (302) 739-4702 or the Division of Fish and Wildlife's

Coordination Section at (302) 739-5296. (*First State News, February 2005*)

### **DELAWARE VETERANS HOME**

Veterans Home contributions can be made with a check payable to: Delaware Veterans Home Fund, and sent to the Department of State, 401 Federal Street, Suite 3, Dover, DE 19901. Your donation is tax deductible.

### **STATE REPOSITORY – DD FORM 214s**

The Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs is the State Repository for DD Forms 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty). If you served in the military between 1976 – 1986, we may not have your record on file. If you would like to bring a copy of your DD Form 214 to our office, it will be placed on microfilm for permanent record. A copy would be available to you or an authorized family member if required. Please call our office for additional information (800) 344-9900 or (302) 739-2792.

### **WOMEN VETERANS ISSUE GROUP**

The group will meet the second Wednesday of each month, starting March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2005 from 9:30-10:30 AM. RSVP or for questions call Kathy Oldham 992-2511 ext 4812.

### **PTSD GROUP FORMING**

Joan Spencer, Counselor, located at The Vet Center, on the grounds of the Wilmington VA Medical Center, is interested in forming a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Group in response to Military Sexual Trauma in support of women veterans. All women veterans that are interested in being part of this support group please contact the Vet Center by calling Joan Spencer at 302-994-1660.

### **COMMISSION MEETINGS**

The Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs meets the fourth Tuesday of each month, 11:00 AM,

802 Silver Lake Blvd, Suite 100, Dover, DE. The meeting schedule varies for June and December of each year. These meetings are open to the public. Any individual requiring special accommodations, shall contact this office one week prior to the meeting date. If you would like to attend, please call 1-800-344-9900 (in State) or (302) 739-2792.

### **MOBILE VETERANS SERVICE CENTER**

Ms. White will be providing services for veterans from the mobile Service Center at the following locations:

AUG 09	Seaford Service Center
AUG 10	Georgetown Cheer Center
AUG 16	Laurel Town Hall
AUG 17	Georgetown Service Center
AUG 23	Bridgeville Town Hall
AUG 24	Bethany Beach Town Hall
AUG 30	Oceanview Town Hall
SEP 20	Laurel Town Hall
SEP 21	Georgetown Cheer Center
SEP 27	Bridgeville Town Hall
SEP 28	Georgetown Service Center

For more information, contact Ms. White at the Pyle State Service Center, (302) 732-9560.

### **VETERAN SERVICE OFFICERS**

#### **Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs**

(Kent County) – Ms. Melanie E. Bronov - Dover office - may be reached Monday –Friday, 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM, (302) 739-2792 or (800) 344-9900 (in State). Please call for an appointment.

(Sussex County) - Ms. Laurie A. White - Pyle State Service Center located in Roxanna, DE, may be reached Monday-Friday, 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM, (302) 732-9560. Please call for an appointment.

#### **American Legion**

Robert McBride, Dept. Service Officer, (302) 633-5323, will visit the following posts between 9:00 AM and 1:00 PM on the following dates:

AUG 05	Oak Orchard/Riverdale, Post 28 (8:00-12:00)	945-1673
AUG 12	Walter L Fox, Post 2	674-3922
SEP 02	Oak Orchard/Riverdale, Post 28 (8:00-12:00)	945-1673
SEP 09	Walter L Fox, Post 2	674-3922
SEP 16	Laurel Post #19	875-9948
SEP 23	David Harrison, Post 14	633-1711
SEP 30	Nanticoke Post #6	629-9915

#### **Paralyzed Veterans of America (DE/MD PVA)**

Darrell Johnson, Sr., National Service Officer, VA Regional Office, 1601 Kirkwood Hwy, Room 26, Wilmington, DE 19805, (302) 633-5325 or (302) 633-5392. Mr. Johnson will make home visits upon request for vets who do not have transportation to the VA. He will be in the Oak Orchard area the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday, Dover the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday, Frederica the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday and at the Home of the Brave on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month. In addition to our service officer at the Wilmington VA Regional Office, we also have a representative, David Timberman, National Liaison Service Officer, at the Home of the Brave on the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday from 10:00 AM until 2:00 PM. The Home of the Brave is located at 6632 Sharps Rd, Milford, DE (302) 424-1681 or 1682.

#### **Disabled American Veterans (DAV)**

Paul Lardizzone, Dept. Service Officer (DAV).

Every Tuesday: DAV Headquarters Building  
& Wednesday 183 South Street  
(Kent) 8:00-12:00 Camden, DE 19934  
(302) 697-9061

Every Thursday: Department of Labor  
(Sussex) 8:00-12:00 Div. of Emp & Trng  
(302) 856-5230 600 N. DuPont Hwy.  
Georgetown, DE 19947

#### **Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)**

Richard Magner, National Service Officer, VA Regional Office, 1601 Kirkwood Hwy, Wilmington, DE 19805, (302) 633-5508.

#### **Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)**

Terry Baker, National Service Officer, VA Regional Office, 1601 Kirkwood Hwy, Wilmington, DE 19805, (302) 633-5357

### **Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)**

James Withrow, Dept. Service Officer, VA Regional Office, 1601 Kirkwood Hwy, Room 21, Wilmington, DE 19805, (800) 461-8262 ext. 5326 or (302) 633-5326.

#### **1<sup>ST</sup> Thursday**

Delaware DOL	(633-5326)	8:00-11:00 AM
Milford VFW	(422-4412)	1:30-4:00 PM

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday**

Delaware DOL	(633-5326)	8:00-11:00 AM
Milton VFW	(684-4975)	1:30-4:00 PM

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday**

Delaware DOL	(633-5326)	8:00-11:00 AM
Rehoboth VFW	(227-3469)	1:30-4:00 PM

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Thursday**

Delaware DOL	(633-5326)	8:00-11:00 AM
Seaford VFW	(629-3092)	1:30-4:00 PM

#### **5<sup>th</sup> Thursday**

Delaware DOL	(633-5326)	8:00-11:00 AM
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NOTE: All persons interested in Outreach Services should first call our office so that some advance information may be obtained to accelerate the application process. Kent & Sussex County residents may call 1-800-461-8262 ext 5326. New Castle County residents may call 633-5326.

NOTE: persons desiring assistance at the Thursday-downstate locations should be at the Delaware DOL no later than 9:00 AM or at the afternoon locations by 2:00 PM. The VFW provides services to veterans and their dependents without respect to veteran service organization affiliation; membership in the VFW is NOT required for service.

### **VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS POC**

#### **Air Force Sergeants Association**

Tony Lee.....(302) 698-5144

#### **American Ex-Prisoners Of War**

Howard Melson.....(302) 539-1808

#### **American Legion**

Ed Phillips Jr.....(302) 628-5221  
**AMVETS**

Michael Brown.....(302) 659-5111

#### **Colonial Paralyzed Veterans of America**

Wayne Carter.....(302) 368-4898

#### **Disabled American Veterans**

Paul Lardizzone.....(302) 697-9061

#### **Jewish War Veterans**

Barry Newstadt.....(302) 475-2820

#### **Korean War Veterans Association**

Dave Gillan.....(302) 737-2242

#### **Military Order of the Purple Heart**

Bill Carroll.....(302) 655-3820

#### **Military Order of the World Wars**

COL (Ret) Eugene A. Hebert.....(302) 335-0110

E-Mail [gene@hebert.net](mailto:gene@hebert.net)

#### **The Reserve Officers Association**

CWO John V. Hawkins, Sr. (Ret)...(302) 328-8115

#### **Veterans of Foreign Wars**

Paul Phillips Jr.....(302) 656-5022

#### **Vietnam Veterans of America**

Tom Daws.....(302) 738-8875

#### **WAVES Nat'l**

Ruth Harden.....(302) 998-1373

### **DELAWARE VETERANS MEMORIAL CEMETERY**

New Castle Co. Section (Bear, DE).....834-8046

Sussex Co. Section (Georgetown, DE).....934-5653

### **VETERANS ADMINISTRATION**

#### **Claims, Benefits, Veterans Services**

(Regional Office).....1-800-827-1000

VA Hospital Scheduling.....1-800-461-8262

.....302-994-2511

#### **Veterans Outreach Center**

(New Castle County).....302-633-5360

(Kent and Sussex Counties).....302-422-8011

#### **Women's Veteran Program Manager**

(Regina A. Lane, RN).....(302) 633-5580

### **EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**

Al Barclift (Wilmington).....302-761-8093

Michael Companion (Wilmington).....302-761-8096

Ron Bythwood (Newark).....302-453-5473  
 Mike Wolanski (Newark).....302-453-5350  
 Steve Flaherty (Dover).....302-739-5473  
 Charley Roberson (Dover).....302-739-5473  
 Norris Townsend (Georgetown).....302-856-5230  
 Cliff Rumph (Georgetown).....302-856-5230

**VETERANS UPWARD BOUND PROGRAM**

Lt. Col. Reginald W. Glasby, (USAR) Counselor/  
 Recruiter. Delaware State University, 1200 N  
 DuPont Highway, Dover DE 19901, (302) 857-  
 6135. E-mail rglasby@desu.edu

**RETIREE ACTIVITIES**

**Retired Activities Office**

Lt. Col Ken Smith, (USAF RET), Bldg 520, Room  
 105, Dover AFB, DE 19902, (302) 677-4612.

**Retired Navy Activities Affairs Office**

Leon Stajkowski, Naval & Marine Corps Reserve  
 Center, 3920 Kirkwood Hwy, Wilmington, DE  
 19808, (302) 998-5194.

**COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Commissioners may be reached by calling (800)  
 344-9900.

Jim Thompson (Chairman).....MCL  
 Gary "Mo" Morris (Vice)....AMERICAN LEGION  
 Cornelius "Bill" Carroll.....MOPH  
 Richard Ennis.....KWVA  
 John Endres.....40 & 8  
 Ruth B. Harden.....WAVES NAT'L  
 Jesse Kitson.....VFW  
 Joseph "Joe" Lank.....MOWW  
 Lou Spitzfaden.....MOAA  
 Paul Lardizzone.....DAV  
 Richard M. Magner.....AMVETS  
 Barry Newstadt.....JWV  
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 Robert E. Wasson.....DELVETS  
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**STREET**\_\_\_\_\_

**CITY**\_\_\_\_\_ **STATE**\_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP**\_\_\_\_\_

**MAIL TO:** **DELAWARE COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**802 SILVER LAKE BLVD, SUITE 100**  
**DOVER, DE 19904**

# STATE OF DELAWARE

"Serving Delaware's Veterans"

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